

REMARKS BY CONGRESSWOMAN BETTY MCCOLLUM—COMMUNITY PUBLIC TALK WITH THE TIBETAN AMERICAN FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA HONORING HIS HOLINESS THE 14TH DALAI LAMA OF TIBET, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, JUNE 24, 2017

Good morning! I am so pleased to be here with Minnesota's strong and thriving Tibetan community.

I wish to thank the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota for inviting me to join you this morning.

Only one month ago—in May—I was in Dharamsala, India as part of an official congressional delegation led by the Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. In Dharamsala my colleagues and I were humbled to be received very warmly and graciously by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We had a very special visit with His Holiness.

Today, it is our honor to welcome His Holiness to Minnesota and his presence is a blessing and inspiration for all of us.

Please accept my offer of strong support for Tibetans in Minnesota and across the U.S., for the Tibetan community in India and Nepal, and all Tibetans living in exile.

The refugee experience, being forced from ones homeland, fleeing violence and persecution, is a journey of loss, pain, and suffering. You never forget home, but now you have a second home and together we must make this home in America one of safety, hope, and opportunity.

We want this home to be welcoming for your families and a place where you have the freedom to maintain your culture, practice your beliefs, and sustain your rich traditions as Tibetans. I know firsthand the important contributions Tibetan-Americans are making here in Minnesota and I am grateful. Your community makes Minnesota a stronger, better state.

In 2015, I was in Tibet, your homeland. I experienced the mountains, the thin air in my lungs, and the warmth of the Tibetan people I met. But, there was also the heavy burden of a land that is not free. The people of Tibet are not free.

Today, let us focus our minds, our hearts, our prayers, and, as free people, let us work to make the people of Tibet free. It is long past time for China's repression in Tibet to end. The human rights abuses must stop. The prisoners of conscience must be set free. The destruction of Tibetan culture and the repression of Buddhist monks and scholars must stop.

With great sadness, I must tell you that two weeks ago I received a letter from China's Counsel General in Chicago asking me to refrain from "any contact with the Dalai Lama in any form." The letter called today's gathering a platform for a separatist plot.

There is no plot, only a path of peace and dialogue. Let us follow His Holiness on that path, a path to separate the Tibetan people from political repression, a path to separate Tibet from endless acts of cultural destruction, and a path to separate the political and religious prisoners from their cells and their suffering.

As a Member of Congress, I urge the Congress and the President of the United States to stand with the people of Tibet to promote human rights, religious freedom, and a meaningful political dialogue.

China is a powerful country. But, the United States is a free and powerful country. The United States must never abandon our commitment to freedom, justice, and human rights around the world. And, we must never abandon the people of Tibet.

I will work in Congress to continue U.S. funding for all Tibetan programs, scholarships, and assistance for refugees. And, I will work to pass H.R. 1872—the "Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2017."

Let me also urge President Trump to meet directly with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and listen to his wise and compassionate insights. Mr. Trump needs to hear why ongoing U.S. support for Tibet is vital.

The teachings of His Holiness are not only wise, they are in the best interest of the United States and of all of mankind. Let us love our planet and work to stop climate change. Let us welcome refugees and all who flee violence and suffering whether Buddhist, Christian or Muslim. Let us open our hearts to the poor and the vulnerable—in our own communities and around the world.

Minnesota is blessed by our Tibetan brothers and sisters. And, today we are blessed by the presence of His Holiness and his teachings.

May peace be upon us all and may we follow its path together.

Thank you.

HONORING NINE SOFTBALL PLAYERS FOR RECEIVING ALL-STATE HONORS

HON. JACK BERGMAN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2017

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, it's my honor to recognize nine exceptional young women from Michigan's First District who have been recognized as All-State athletes in the state of Michigan by the Michigan High School Softball Coaches Association. Receipt of All-State Honors signifies that these young women dedicated themselves entirely, through countless hours of practice and preparation, to their sport.

These outstanding young women may represent different schools and different teams, but they all share a unique love of the game. Onaway Cardinals pitcher Calley Selke, for instance, earned the right to be called an All-State athlete.

Additionally, the Alpena Wildcats took their seventh straight Big North Conference title with outfielder Liz Kendzierski and utility player Jade Schultz represented among those who earned All-State Honors.

The Rogers City Hurons had several players who were selected to receive All-State Honors including pitcher Jayna Hance, shortstop Kayla Rabeau, third baseman Hannah Fleming, outfielder Taylor Fleming, and designated player Saige Wagner. These young women led the Hurons to their sixth straight district title and fourth regional title in five years.

Not to be outdone, the Indian River Inland Lakes Bulldogs, a team that boasted two All-State athletes of its own in pitcher Chloe Mallory and catcher Pamela Braund, ultimately prevailed as Division 4 State Champs.

Mr. Speaker, it's my honor to recognize these young women as recipients of All-State Honors for the sport of softball. Their accomplishments have brought pride to their teams, schools, and hometowns. They have set a positive example of what is possible for anyone in Michigan's First District. On behalf of my constituents, I wish to congratulate Jayna Hance, Kayla Rabeau, Hannah Fleming, Taylor Fleming, Saige Wagner, Chloe Mallory, Pamela Braund, Calley Selke, Liz Kendzierski, and Jade Schultz and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

CONGRATULATING LA CROSSE FIRE CHIEF GREGG CLEVELAND ON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2017

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honor of the career of La Crosse Fire Chief Gregg Cleveland, who will be retiring in June of 2017. He has served as a firefighter for more than 36 years, including 11 years as the La Crosse Fire Chief.

Chief Cleveland's years of service as a firefighter are exemplary in every respect. He earned an Associate Degree in Fire Protection from Fox Valley Technical College, a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Lakeland College, and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. He is also a graduate of the Executive Fire Officer's program.

Chief Cleveland began his career more than three decades ago with the Menasha Fire Department. He then served as Chief of the Marshfield Fire Department for 15 years, and later took over as chief of the La Crosse Fire Department in 2006. In addition to this service in fire departments, Chief Cleveland has also been active in other firefighting organizations, including the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association, where he served as President and advocated for the organization on numerous issues. He also served with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), where he was a member of NFPA's North Central Regional Fire Code Development Committee, and served as Secretary of NFPA's Fire Service Section.

Under Chief Cleveland's leadership, the City of La Crosse has seen numerous changes for the better in the fire service industry. In 2014, the La Crosse Fire Department received international accreditation, demonstrating the quality of the Department. That same year, he was instrumental in consolidating the La Crosse Building and Inspection Department into the Fire Department, which created a new Division of Fire Prevention and Building Safety. He also helped the Department lead the way on health issues, making the Department one of the first in the state to carry an opioid overdose antidote.

Chief Cleveland's leadership was crucial to the City of La Crosse when the city faced emergency situations and natural disasters. These included an EF2 tornado that struck the south side of La Crosse in 2011 and a building explosion on the north side of the city in 2014. Thanks to Chief Cleveland's leadership, the City of La Crosse has been able to recover from these situations and continue to grow and prosper.

It has been an honor for me to serve as U.S. Representative for Wisconsin's Third Congressional District during Chief Cleveland's tenure in La Crosse. He will be greatly missed by the La Crosse Fire Department and the people he helped throughout his career. On behalf of my constituents in Wisconsin and a grateful nation, I would like to thank and commend Chief Cleveland for his years of service in the fire service industry. I wish him and his family all the best in his retirement.